



# Hepatitis Update

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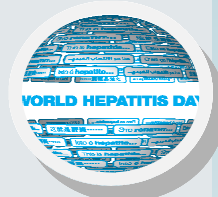
*Hepatitis Update* is brought to you by the Division of Disease Control and Health Protection, Bureau of Communicable Diseases, STD & Viral Hepatitis Section at the Florida Department of Health.

If you have a news item or photo you would like to submit, email the editor at:

April.Crowley@flhealth.gov

## World Hepatitis Day

By April Crowley



World Hepatitis Day was observed on July 28, 2014. All across the world, this was a chance to call for a change in attitude toward viral hepatitis. This year's theme was **"Hepatitis: Think Again."** The World Hepatitis Alliance provided campaign materials on their website at: <http://www.worldhepatitisday.org/>.

- **Informed? Unaware?** Viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer. Liver cancer is the second biggest cancer killer. Hepatitis: Think Again.
- **Feeling fine? Are you sure?** Symptoms of viral hepatitis often go unnoticed. Get tested. Hepatitis: Think Again.
- **Accepted? Refused?** Stigma kills. Don't discriminate. Hepatitis: Think again.
- **Protected? Vulnerable?** Protect against viral hepatitis. Vaccination works. Hepatitis: Think Again.

Various screening, vaccination and educational opportunities were held by many county health departments (CHDs) in Florida. Some of the awareness events are featured throughout this newsletter.



Left to right: **Laura Dunn** and **Grace Gifford** with the Florida DOH in **Hernando County**. Special thanks to **Ann-Gayl Ellis** for helping get the signs printed and ready to go.

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# National Hepatitis C Summit in Atlanta

By Phil Reichert



Phil Reichert

The Viral Hepatitis Action Coalition and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) held the *National Summit on Hepatitis C Treatment and Cure* in Atlanta June 17 and 18, 2014. This meeting provided an opportunity for public and private health experts to discuss both recently approved hepatitis C medications and several more that will be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) within the next couple of years. It also marked the 25th anniversary of the identification and public announcement of the hepatitis C virus.

Until 1989, researchers and scientists were aware of a hepatitis virus known as “non-A non-B.” Dr. Harvey Alter, a physician, and Dr. Daniel Bradley, a CDC researcher in the 1970s, both were honored at this summit for their work toward the discovery and identification of the hepatitis C virus. Dr. John Ward, Director of CDC’s Division of Viral Hepatitis, provided both men with certificates of recognition as well as a pertinent cartoon commissioned by Ward to Atlanta Journal and Constitution political cartoonist Mike Luckovich (the cartoon appears at the end of this article). Dr. Alter recounted how people were tested in the 1970s for hepatitis A and B and were found to be negative, although they were clearly infected with some form of viral hepatitis.

Dr. Jonathan Mermin, Director of the CDC’s National Center for HIV, Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention (who is also Dr. Ward’s boss) opened the plenary session with a laundry list of needs regarding hepatitis C testing and treatment. Included in the list: make it easier for people to be tested, more effective communications (including communicating to the people who would benefit from testing), enhanced research, make treatment more affordable and provide for better health equity. He posed the question, “How do we make it so that anyone with hepatitis C who is a candidate for treatment can be treated, whether or not they have health insurance?” This was a major topic throughout the meeting, but it did not lead to a universal solution.

Dr. Gary Davis, Co-Chair of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, discussed the need for patient-centered recommendations, especially around the avoidance of risk. He said that *official* guidelines take too long to write and publish, and the topic of hepatitis C is a rapidly-changing one. Guidance should have *flavors*. Recommendations should exhibit guidelines for practice, policy, information, best practices, standards of care and other treatment considerations. As new drugs are approved by the FDA, health care givers should not have to wait months or years for guidance on best treatment practices.



Colleen Flanigan, the viral hepatitis prevention coordinator in New York State, informed everyone about the hepatitis C testing law that went into effect on January 1 of this year in New York. Like the bill that was introduced in Florida’s House and Senate during the 2014 legislative session (but did not pass), the New York law requires physicians and other health care workers to offer one-time hepatitis C testing to individuals born from 1945 to 1965. This is in line with the CDC guidance released in August of 2012. Flanigan also mentioned that death rates due to hepatitis C have exceeded HIV death rates for several years both in New York and in the United States.

Left to Right: Dr. Harvey Alter, Dr. John Ward (Director of CDC’s Division of Viral Hepatitis) and Dr. Dan Bradley. Doctors Alter and Bradley were instrumental in identifying the Hep C virus in 1989.

Matt Salo, the Executive Director of the National Association of Medicaid Directors, talked about how the annual federal budget for Medicaid is currently \$420 billion. If all Medicaid-eligible hepatitis C patients were treated, the cost would run around \$210 billion at today’s drug prices. Other statistics and facts he stated were: 72 million Americans received at least one Medicaid service in 2012; Medicaid makes up 20 percent to 30 percent of every state budget; and Medicaid is

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### *Hep C Summit continued from page 2*

jointly financed by both federal and state governments. He made a humorous observation by quoting Homer Simpson, "Alcohol: The cause and solution to all of life's problems!" To keep this quote in context, Mr. Salo suggested replacing the word *alcohol* with *Medicaid*.

Some of the other speakers who spoke about related issues were: Daniel Raymond, from the Harm Reduction Coalition; Dr. Julio Montaner, from the University of British Columbia; Anne Brenner, the Washington State Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator; Dan Church, the Massachusetts Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator; John Zibell and Cynthia Jorgensen, both from CDC; and Jeff Levi, the former Deputy Director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.



Left to Right: Anne Brenner (Wash), Dan Church (Mass) and Colleen Flanigan (NY)

Finally, Dr. Scott Holmberg, the Chief of Epidemiology and Surveillance at CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis, said we should be careful about how we use viral hepatitis estimates. Although we have a good estimate of how many people are infected with hepatitis C in the United States (around 3.1 million, or one percent of the population), this data becomes unreliable when we attempt to estimate local infection rates.

The bottom-line message from the summit is that we need to balance hepatitis C treatment with the cost of the treatment. And, the CDC continues to advocate for testing all Americans born from 1945 to 1965 one time. For people who test positive for hepatitis C because of a risk they had 20 or more years prior and were unaware of their infection, there are several services that public health can offer outside of treatment. These



include: counseling on how to remain healthy (good nutrition and reducing or eliminating drugs and alcohol), instructing how to *not* infect others and finding out whether they are good candidates for treatment. Not everyone with a positive hepatitis C antibody test requires treatment.

For more information on hepatitis C, go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/index.htm> or

<http://www.hcvadvocate.org/>.

## Hepatitis C Timeline: 25 Years of Discovery

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the discovery of the hepatitis C virus. Since the virus was discovered in 1989, significant public health and research advances have led to great progress in curbing new infections and developing life-saving treatment options. Unfortunately, millions of Americans continue to live with this disease and most don't know they are infected. In Florida, many county health departments (CHDs) offer free hepatitis C testing to adults at-risk. In 2013, CHDs tested 23,442 Floridians for this disease.

Explore this timeline at: <http://www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis/Timeline.htm> to learn more about the highlights and milestones from the past 25 years of hepatitis C discovery.

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## National African American Hepatitis C Action Day in Monroe County

By Jean Barber

We modified one of the fliers from the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA) with their permission. **Peggy Ward Grant**, our HIV prevention person who works with us at homeless shelter outreaches, distributed this flyer at local African American churches. We are very grateful to work so closely with Peggy!



July 25, 2014 marks the second annual observance of National African American Hepatitis C Action Day, a commemoration designed to heighten public awareness about the devastating impact of the Hepatitis C epidemic on communities of African descent.

Hepatitis C affects the liver.

African Americans are twice as likely to have ever been infected with the Hepatitis C virus than whites.

African American mortality related to the Hepatitis C virus is almost double the rate for non-Hispanic white Americans.

More than 75% of adults with Hepatitis C are Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers are five times more likely to have been infected with Hepatitis C, and most of them don't know they are infected.

# Get Tested!



*For more information on hepatitis testing in the Florida Keys, call (305) 809-5620.*

For information on participating in the activities taking place on July 25, 2014 visit [www.nblca.org](http://www.nblca.org), call 212-614-0023 or e-mail [info@nblca.org](mailto:info@nblca.org)

Co-Founders: National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, Inc., Coalition on Positive Health Empowerment, Harm Reduction Coalition  
Sponsored by: New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute, NYC Faith Based HIV/AIDS Initiative, Office of Minority Health MPCMP101057-04-00

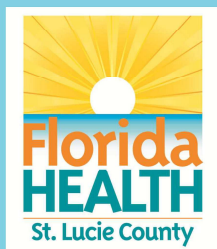
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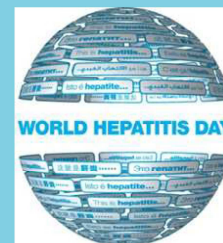
## World Hepatitis Day in St Lucie County

By Kim Kossler, Epidemiology Program Supervisor

Overall it was a good outreach. St Lucie's Epidemiology Program collaborated with STD and HIV Programs to offer free testing for hepatitis, STD and HIV. We also provided education on these diseases and how to prevent them. Below is the flyer we created.



# World Hepatitis Day July 28th



If you can answer **YES** to any of the following questions, then you may be at an increased risk for hepatitis.

Adults who are at increased risk for hepatitis A (HAV) include:

- ☐ men who have sex with men
- ☐ persons who have ever used injecting drugs
- ☐ persons who have clotting factor disorders
- ☐ persons with chronic liver disease

Adults who are at increased risk for hepatitis B (HBV) include:

- ☐ hemodialysis patients
- ☐ men who have sex with men
- ☐ persons who have ever used injecting drugs
- ☐ household and sex contacts of HBV positive persons
- ☐ heterosexual persons with multiple sex partners

Adults who are at increased risk for hepatitis C (HCV) include:

- ☐ persons who have ever used injecting drugs
- ☐ persons who have received a blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to 1992
- ☐ persons who were ever on long-term hemodialysis
- ☐ persons who were born to a HCV positive mother
- ☐ persons who have been told they have elevated liver enzymes
- ☐ persons born from 1945-1965



**Know your status, get tested**

**July 28 10 am to 2 pm**

**5150 NW Milner Drive**



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## Hepatitis Training for Broward Staff

By Deborah J. Hill, Executive Community Health Nursing Director

On June 27, 2014, the Florida Department of Health in Broward County held an in-service training titled "Understanding the Community Impact of Hepatitis" in the administrative center auditorium.

This training was open to nurses, clinicians, clinic staff, immunization outreach staff, STD staff, school health and all interested employees. The course was approved for three nursing CEUs.



That's Dr. Bhamidimarri at the podium.

Our presenters included our very own Jody Jones, who provided training on perinatal hepatitis B. Dr. Patrick Kenney shared treatment and awareness updates regarding hepatitis C and Dr. Kalyan Bhamidimarri gave us an update on "Hepatitis from A to Z." This turned out to be one of our most informative and educational trainings!

This half-day program was designed to increase staff's ability to understand the etiology, mode of transmission and signs and symptoms of hepatitis B infection.

The staff also gained knowledge of updates and prevention strategies for viral hepatitis, understanding the role of the Perinatal Hepatitis B Program at the DOH in Broward, and learning how to facilitate care to clients affected by the virus.

## World Hepatitis Day in Seminole County

By Enid Santiago-Cruz

The Department of Health in Seminole County teamed up with Hope and Help Center and Café Latino of Central Florida during *World Hepatitis Day* to provide free hepatitis testing. The event took place at the Walgreens Pharmacy, located on State Road 436 in Altamonte Springs, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

The Hepatitis Prevention Program in Seminole County also offers free hepatitis testing Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm on a walk-in basis at 400 West Airport Boulevard in Sanford.

The Hope and Help Center provides assistance with HIV/AIDS programs such as case management, peer support services, Food Pantry and much more. Café Latino Coalition is a network of community partners whose mission is to promote HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis awareness and testing among Latinos and Hispanics in the area.



Hope and Help of Central Florida let us use their mobile unit to test for viral hepatitis while they screened for HIV and syphilis.

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## Notes From the 2014 Florida Public Health Association (FPHA) Annual Educational Conference

By Phil Reichert

The 2014 *Florida Public Health Association Annual Educational Conference* took place in Orlando July 30 through August 1. The theme this year was "The Future is Now: Rethinking Public Health." Lesli Ahonkhai, the current president of the FPHA, provided opening remarks and introduced several local public health and governmental dignitaries. There were over 350 registrants during the three-day event. There were 26 exhibitors, each featuring a product or service related to the field of public health. There were 18 poster presentations demonstrating research done in public health by several of Florida's colleges of public health and by local health department staff.



Lesli Ahonkhai

Dr. Roderick King, Director of the Florida Institute for Health Innovation in West Palm Beach, stated that we must balance health care costs with quality of health care and we need to reduce costs of health and improve health outcomes. He spoke about facilitating collaborative efforts among different entities that can affect what he called "population health," which he equated with public health. Dr. King said that to reach youth with public health messages we should not use brochures and health fairs. Rather, youth pay attention and respond to social media such as Twitter and Facebook. He also said we need to look at social determinants of health status. He mentioned that social and economic situations affect health, including mental health and depression. According to at least one study, about 75 percent of Americans think our health care system is too complex. The United States has diverse cultures and is multi-lingual, so we must collaborate at all levels to improve and ensure good public health.



Dr. King

According to Donna Peterson, Dean of the University of South Florida College of Public Health, we need to integrate public health into professions like law, ethics and economics. We should also study population health challenges. She encouraged students of public health to intern in public health programs so they can see first-hand how public health works.

Integration and collaboration were terms used throughout most of the conference as a common theme. Dr. Anna Likos, Director of the Department of Health's (DOH) Division of Disease Control and Health Protection, spoke about integration and collaboration and about public health successes such as, how DOH dealt with Chikungunya and dengue fever cases and challenges (public health needs to work on recent increases in pertussis and sexually transmitted diseases). She emphasized the importance of what she referred to as "counting stuff." We need to ensure high quality surveillance so we have the data to guide our public health programs.



Dr. Likos

Richard Hofrichter, Senior Director for Health Equity at the National Association of County and City Health Officials in Washington, DC, said that life expectancy is affected by sociology, culture and economics. He added that rates of disease are significantly higher in lower income people than those with higher income. He suggested approaching public health inequities by addressing social and economic indicators. He spoke about the importance of collective wisdom that comes with social collaboration, encouraging citizens to be active and build lasting relationships. Hofrichter highlighted that we need a public agenda that builds alliances, develops infrastructure and deals fairly with racism, class exploitation and gender inequality.



Dr. Hofrichter

I was privileged to be invited to provide a presentation on viral hepatitis in Florida while focusing on the recent developments and recommendations regarding hepatitis C in particular. I spoke about the hard work the local health departments do with the provision of hepatitis A and B vaccine and viral hepatitis testing to adults at risk. We are lucky in Florida to have funding available to provide viral hepatitis

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**FPHA Conference continued from page 7**

prevention services, since many states do not receive specific state funding for these activities.

I also talked about how we oversee two federal grants that provide for hepatitis prevention and vaccine services. We work closely with the Bureau of Epidemiology regarding the surveillance portion of a CDC grant to Florida. We collaborate closely with the HIV, STD and Immunization programs in DOH. Viral hepatitis testing and vaccine services are integrated into other programs at the local health department level. Other topics covered in the talk were CDC's 2012 recommendation to test everyone born from 1945 to 1965 one time for hepatitis C (about 75 percent of all chronic hepatitis C in the US occurs in this population), and recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approvals of hepatitis C drugs that have a nearly 100% success rate of curing the disease.

Finally, Dr. John Armstrong, Florida's Surgeon General and Secretary of the Department of Health, provided the "State of the State" address to the FPHA group. He started with a history of public health in Florida, and described how in 2014, we are celebrating 125 years of public health in our state. He said that public health made Florida inhabitable, with an 1889 population of about 280,000 (Key West was the most populated city at that time) and nearly 20 million today. He spoke about Florida's "Healthiest Weight" initiative and how, if you look at our trash, you can see the less than optimal choices we make about our health. He noted that you can always find soda cans, cigarette butts, fast food wrappers and other items that demonstrate our life-style choices. Dr. Armstrong closed by quoting the Austrian-born American business management expert, Peter Drucker, "The best way to predict your future is to create it."



Dr. Armstrong

For more information about the Florida Public Health Association and the annual educational conference, go to [www.fpha.org](http://www.fpha.org).

## **Bits and Pieces**

By Phil Reichert

For those of you who are not as old as me (or as old as April, too), you may not know that "Bits and Pieces" was a song released in February of 1964 by the Dave Clark Five, an English rock and roll band who were only second to the Beatles during 1964 and 1965 for top-ten songs. "Bits and Pieces" hit number four in the US and number two in Great Britain. Anyway, that sounded like an appropriate title for this section of short pieces regarding viral hepatitis and the Florida Hepatitis Prevention Program.

-On August 1, the Hepatitis Prevention Program officially moved from HIV/AIDS into the STD Section. We are now the *STD and Viral Hepatitis Section* of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases on the table of organization. The *bureau* also includes the HIV/AIDS, Immunization and TB Programs. Additionally, the bureau is a part of the Division of Disease Control and Health Protection.

-From January 1 through June 30, 2014, the 67 county health departments participating in the Hepatitis 09 Program sent 11,891 specimens to the state lab to be tested for hepatitis C antibodies. We are on track to exceed the number of tests performed in 2013 by the end of the year. Yes, that's a great thing! Generally, the positivity rate is around 10%.

-Florida reported an average of 22,500 cases of *chronic* hepatitis C each year from 2003 through 2013. During that same period, there were an average of 48 *acute* cases reported each year.

-Based on data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), approximately 1.6 percent of the population in Florida is infected with hepatitis C. That's about 312,000 Floridians. The real problem is, about two-thirds do not know they are infected. This is the main reason that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that Americans born from 1945 to 1965 get tested for hepatitis C one time. Individuals need to ask their doctor or health care giver to be tested. And, health care givers need to ask patients if they need to be tested.

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***Bits and Pieces continued from page 8***

-We do not often talk as much about chronic hepatitis B as we do C, but in Florida, there were an average of 4,105 cases of chronic hepatitis B reported in Florida each year during the five-year period of 2009 through 2013.

-State General Revenue funding for the Hepatitis Prevention Program remains level for the 2014-2015 fiscal year at \$1.4 million, based on last year's amount. We are able to continue to offer hepatitis A-B-C panel tests and hepatitis A and B vaccine to adults thanks to the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Patient Care Programs. They provide more than half the funding for those two important viral hepatitis prevention activities. Also, for the past two years, the HIV/AIDS Surveillance Program has provided funding for some equipment and supplies.

-The CDC vaccine grant (which provided over 13,000 doses of hepatitis B vaccine and \$212,169 for a two-year period) was due to end on September 29, 2014. We just received word that we will be able to order an additional 4,500 doses of hepatitis B vaccine and continue this project through September of 2015.

## **Viral Hepatitis Council Meeting Held**

**By Phil Reichert**

The 2014 Viral Hepatitis Council (VHC) meeting was held in Tampa on August 21 and 22. The group met to discuss prevention, testing, treatment, other viral hepatitis issues and related topics. The VHC is made up of 15 members that represent research, medicine, community-based non-profit organizations (CBO), individuals infected with viral hepatitis and public and private health entities. Members come from all over Florida.

The VHC members are in the process of updating the Florida Hepatitis Prevention Comprehensive Plan. The updated plan will be renamed *The Florida Hepatitis Prevention Action Plan 2014-2018* to reflect the recommendations put forth in the hepatitis action plan published by the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Titled *Combating the Silent Epidemic of Viral Hepatitis: Action plan for the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis*, the HHS plan was first released in 2011. An updated version appeared earlier this year.

The next VHC meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 2015. For a look at the current hepatitis plan, go to [http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/hepatitis/\\_documents/Comp-Hepatitis-Plan2.pdf](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/hepatitis/_documents/Comp-Hepatitis-Plan2.pdf).



The Viral Hepatitis Council members are front left to right: Brian Anderson & Phil Reichert. Rear left to right: Dr. William Chen, Gordon Licata, Mike Jolly, Charles Dennis, Donna Dowling, Kim Saiswick, Enid Santiago-Cruz, Susanne Crowe, John-Mark Schacht & Karen Muller. Not pictured: Dr. Philip Styne, Cindy McLaughlin & Dr. Frank Johanson.

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